

Contents

[EDITOR'S NOTE](#)

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**I wrote this in 2022, when I was getting divorced.
I filed it away.
I didn't want to be bitter.**

**Three years later, I don't see bitterness.
You tell me.**

I thought marriage would be a passport to a bigger life.

Instead, I got five years in solitary confinement.

**I was her everything—
Her chauffeur.
Her scapegoat.
Her emotional punching bag.**

A professional doormat.

**Two hours of chit-chat before breakfast. Every day.
Miss one morning, and I was the villain who didn't care.**

**Friends? Off-limits.
Family? Excommunicated.**

**The only "safe" place was inside her orbit—
which felt less like love and more like house arrest with pretty curtains.**

I shudder to think of it.

**By the time I woke up, I was fifty pounds heavier and severely
depressed.**

I couldn't see the truth staring back at me.

That this relationship was killing me.

I didn't want to see it.

No — she was my ticket to America.

My one and only.

I wasn't going to pass it up.

What saved me wasn't therapy or prayer.

I ran like a gazelle.

Danced like there was no tomorrow.

Meditated for days nonstop.

Tony Robbins hired me.

I travelled all over the country.

And with every mile, every salsa spin, every meditation—

I felt the chains rattle... then drop.

It's like I crawled out of the nine gates of hell into a land of milk and honey.

Almost.

This isn't a revenge story.

Or a pity party.

It's a jailbreak manual for anyone sleeping beside their warden.

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Dear Permission to be Powerful Reader,

This year, I've been through hell.

I'm not broken.

And I'm winning the war.

It's been hell, all the same.

Many previous versions of me would have crumbled in so much turmoil.

But I went the distance.

34-year-old Anton had the strength to win.

To not be a victim.

To figure out why he was broken.

To heal.

My relationship always felt oppressive.

I was unhappy for a long time.

The whole time?

Hard to tell when misery is your norm.

**She had an insatiable need for
attention.**

It took me a few years to figure that out.

People hide their craziness.

Avoid it.

Deny it.

I thought I was the bad guy for not wanting to meet her constant demands.

But then one day, I thought about it...

**Most adults spend time with each other at the end
of the day, after the kids have been cared for,**

work has been done, and responsibilities have been attended to.

Not us.

2 hours of "chit chat" before breakfast...

Everyday...

And if my time is better used elsewhere...

I'm neglectful, selfish, and inattentive.

A low-down, dirty dog.

The worst person ever.

She would speak to me like this.

And I accepted it because it was familiar.

I never thought twice about it.

That's why the whole thing seemed so normal.

Why she became my universe.

My only friend.

Only family.

Any time I brought my friends around her...

There was a problem.

Her family is above reproach.

But mine.

She wants me to stop talking to them forever.

My family hated her.

To me, it looked like persecution.

I wanted to protect my relationship at all costs.

We had a bright future.

One night, at a bar with friends.

She clutches me tight...

Like any woman might snatch me up at any moment.

One mocks: “She wants Anton all to herself.”

Every female friend was excommunicated.

Then everybody in general.

Every time I went out dancing...

I’d come home and get grief about it.

I learned to expect it.

I stopped going out one day because it seemed easier than the never-ending power struggle.

Checkmate.

Now, I'm completely isolated.

This is absurd.

Why would I go along with this?

I have many answers to give.

I was not healthy either.

And I was ashamed of the whole thing.

It only made me want to retreat further into my shell.

I never felt comfortable around other people when she was around — which was all the time.

I think the alarming thing was that didn't turn the lightbulb on.

Part of me honestly didn't feel like I had "permission" to complain about a damn thing.

One time, a friend comes over, and she comes around later to say I must give her 24 hours' notice before I can bring a friend over.

Yes, this happened.

She tried to move her sister into the house...

Even though I insisted she was not welcome to live with us.

I threatened to move out if her sister moved in...

It didn't matter.

For all the attention she required, she was woefully unwilling to do anything I was interested in.

Can you believe this is what I thought love was all about?

Sigh.

I used to walk her every day like I was her dog.

Yet she hadn't been on a single run with me in 7 years.

I had a life before I met this girl—all mine.

**On Saturday night, I knew where I'd be going and what I'd be doing.
And it was a good time.**

I had friends and a social life.

People liked me.

They knew me.

I got along with everyone.

Somewhere along the way, I made a few wrong turns and got lost.

I lost myself.

Maybe I'd always been missing.

And, I felt trapped.

Eventually, I became completely isolated and 50 pounds overweight.

Sadly, I couldn't connect the dots...

Couldn't see that my relationship was causing me so much grief.

The indoctrination was slow.

Like the frog in boiling water.

Yet, the red flags were always there.

I ignored them.

And I felt comfortable.

- ☞ **Comfortable in isolation.**
- ☞ **Comfortable being dominated.**
- ☞ **Comfortable being criticized.**
- ☞ **Comfortable feeling trapped.**
- ☞ **Comfortable feeling invisible.**

This was my norm.

Long before I met her.

I was reduced to her Chauffeur for 5 years.

That's where the term comes from.

I drove her everywhere like an unpaid Uber driver.

Like I had nothing better to do.

So why the hell did I like her?

Well...

For one thing...

Some people have no idea what love is.

They're very confused about what love even is.

That said... She was brilliant.

Perhaps the smartest person I've ever met.

Her mind was always whirring with ideas.

And she was a hell of an entrepreneur.

It was exciting seeing her grow.

And, we had many adventures together.

The bad parts of the relationship were often ignored and unacknowledged.

I felt inadequate next to her.

Like her judgment was better than mine.

Big mistake.

For 5 years...

She was my universe.

It was exhausting.

I'm STILL tired.

After work, taking care of her grandfather, chores, and house repairs, there was almost no time left for me...

She always made herself the top priority.

And I always accepted being dead last.

She had lots of strategies for making this happen.

One was the daily power struggle.

Every day, she'd badger me about something.

Nonstop.

Until she got her way.

I felt hopelessly guilty.

She knew I would cave in if she just hounded me long enough.

It didn't matter if she had to guilt-trip me.

Or bulldoze over me completely.

She'd never stop.

I couldn't stop her.

Believe me.

I tried.

And, to be fair...

A lot hasn't been said about my role in this dynamic.

It takes two to tango.

That took me much longer to figure out.

I'm still a work in progress.

That said, when I FINALLY started to place limits on her...

She staged a full revolt.

Frankly, I was no match...

The whole thing fell apart.

Regaining my freedom hurt like hell.

I started running.

I lost 50 pounds.

I beat depression.

I ran 100+ races.

I became a salsa dancer...

I attended HUNDREDS of salsa parties.

I thought my best partying days were long over.

Suddenly, after all that servitude...

I doth drank from the gauntlet of beautiful women.

And I even became a Buddhist monk.

All while writing for Tony Robbins.

It was the adventure of my life.

I wanted my life back.

So, I took it.

**THIS is what my upcoming
memoir is about...**



HELL AND PARADISE

AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY

Anton Volney

Me being stuck in a toxic relationship.

Me unlearning generational trauma.

Me holding onto the tiniest hope for a brighter future.

All while making a long ass journey to America.

I hope that clears things up.

Have you ever felt invisible inside your relationship?

Until next time,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature reads "Anton Volney". The first name "Anton" is written in a cursive script, and the last name "Volney" is written in a more bold, cursive script. There are several long, sweeping lines that cross through the signature, giving it a dynamic and somewhat abstract appearance.



P.S.: To sample the first chapter of my book, go [here](#).